

## GLADYS CHICHENOFF INTERVIEW NOVEMBER 27, 1993

Mary Jane Longrich, Interviewer

GLADYS: I was born in 1911 in the little village of Ouzinkie. I went to school there and moved to Kodiak in 1947. I got married in 1933 in Afognak by Father Gerasim.

MARY JANE: Did people go to the church in Monk's Lagoon from Ouzinkie?

GLADYS: Yes we did we used to go ,on holidays. We used to go in the open dory. They had power dories at the time. People didn't have big boats like they do right now. And my brother had a power dory.

MARY JANE: Did a lot of your family travel by water then?

GLADYS: Yes, yes, oh there was no airplanes at the time, growing up

MARY JANE: How many were in your family?

GLADYS: There was ten of us in the family. I'm the sixth one, the first daughter Mamma had, and Dora was two years younger than I am. And my Papa died 1921, in July, and Kathy, my youngest sister was born September 30. She doesn't know her Father, two months after Papa died she was born. And Mamma ,she widowed very young. And then I have these older brothers that used to fish summertime, wintertime they hunt,they trap, and there were a lot of foxes then, and summertime there were a lot of fish.So we got along real good. It's a good thing Mamma never remarried , she was so sweet, so nice, she brought us up a real nice close family,we were a happy family.

MARY JANE: Your father died when he was pretty young then?

GLADYS: Yes, he had pneumonia,he was much older than Mamma, Ma was young.

MARY JANE: What year did you say he died?

GLADYS: July, 1921.

MARY JANE: What was your Father's name?

GLADYS: Paul Katelnikoff.

MARY JANE: So there were ten children and all of them survived?

GLADYS: No, all the boys are gone now, just three girls left. Philip was the last one to pass away here, six years ago, he was 85 years old. I had a little brother who, he died when he just turned 7 years old with diphtheria. There was that sickness going around.

MARY JANE: Was that an epidemic?

GLADYS: Epidemic yes, in Ouzinkie, in Kodiak, and I guess in Afognak too. I can't remember what year that was, years I can't remember. There was quite a few children died during that epidemic.

MARY JANE: How old were you then?

GLADYS: I can't remember how old I was.

MARY JANE: Do you remember taking care of him?

GLADYS: Oh yes, and there was no doctors, no nurses, just sometimes boats would come you know.

MARY JANE: Did you take care of your younger brothers and sisters a lot?

GLADYS: Oh yes I did. I'm the oldest one, Dora was two years younger than I am, and Kathryn, of course, she was born two months after Papa died.

MARY JANE: What did your Dad do while he was living?

GLADYS: He was a fisherman, like I said wintertime they go out trapping, and did a lot of hunting, and then taking care of that wood, laying all that wood on the sled because we had heater and wood stove, there were no such thing as oil stoves there at that time. We had to take water, and outside nushniks, oh yeah.

MARY JANE: Where did you get the water, from streams?

GLADYS: Oh we had nice springs and a well there, two of them. Then we had cows.

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We used to milk them, we had a lot of chickens.

MARY JANE: Do you remember how many cows?

GLADYS: About eight or ten. We had a big barn and we had a nice big house too. My father built the house, and my brother Philip was a carpenter, he even built a house for me and Zack after we got married. Nice little house we had in Ouzinkie before we moved here.

MARY JANE: So what did people do for most their food? Did you have a garden?

GLADYS: Oh yeah, we had a big garden. We grow potatoes, rutabagas, carrots, and radishes. Then we used to go across the bay and the boys would cut grass and then start raking, Momma was strong, she was my height, and she used to make us haystacks, a lot of haystacks. A lot of people did, quite a few people in Ouzinkie had cows, and that's why they put all that hay away in the winter for the cows. We did real well.

MARY JANE: I suppose you ate a lot of fish?

GLADYS: A lot of fish and salt fish, I remember going into the shed and there'd be barrels of salt salmon.

MARY JANE: And then that was what you used for Perok ?

GLADYS: Yes, and you have to soak it to get the salt out before you cook it. Then the boys used to bring all those ducks and everything. They brought clams, they'd go clam digging.

MARY JANE: So you must have had a wonderful diet ?

GLADYS: Wonderful ! Yeah, I really enjoyed growing up there in the village, it was really nice, like I said we were one big happy family. Very very nice. Papa worked hard, Momma was a hard working woman. And then she used to do the janitorial work at school, and I used to help her clean the school.

MARY JANE: What was the school like?

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GLADYS: I don't know. All I remember growing up was that little school was so small and Miss Clark, I think there's a school named after her in Anchorage, she was our teacher. And Mrs. Wiley, and Mrs. Grimes, Grimes had a cannery. After we grew up we started working in the cannery, too. Mamma worked in the cannery in summertime, there was no such thing as welfare or anything like that. In the wintertime she worked in the school.

MARY JANE: Did the school go to sixth grade?

GLADYS: No, it went to 8th grade. I didn't graduate from 8th grade, I quit because I had to help Mom, but my sister Dora, she graduated, and the boys did too. When my youngest sister graduated from high school she went to Wrangell. She was there for four years, and she graduated. She's the only one in our family who graduated from high school, and then she came back.

MARY JANE: Did she live in Ouzinkie after she graduated ?

GLADYS: Yes, she was married and had two children, now she's in Anchorage.

MARY JANE: So when did you get married?

GLADYS: 1933 I got married. I was 22. My husband, Zack Chichenoff was 34, he was quite a bit older than I am. Just like Momma and Papa. Then I had three girls, Maria was born 1934, Norma was born in 1936, and my youngest one, Kathryn, 1938. So I had two girls graduated at Mt. Edgecomb, Maria and Norma and Kathryn graduated here [Kodiak]. We moved here in the Fall, Zack used to work in the cannery, he wasn't a fisherman. We moved here in 1947, Zack had a job working construction at Chiniak, and after that he started janitoring here in school. In Ouzinkie there was no jobs in the winter. There were two canneries, Katmai and Grimes Packing Company, but Grimes Packing Company lost part of the cannery during the earthquake. They hired some local workers and they brought in workers,

mostly men, Filipinos. But we all worked and the boys were always out fishing.

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After we moved to Kodiak in 1947 , Zack worked at Chiniak and then janitoring at the high school until he retired in 1975. He was 77 when he died , he was born in 1900 in Afognak. I worked here in the Griffen Memorial Hospital, all the time I was here I worked in that little hospital, and we moved to that big one, I worked there too.

MARY JANE: Did you visit Afognak quite a bit then?

GLADYS: Yes, we used to make a trip there. We spent one year there, the year we were married we were in Afognak. Then we moved to Ouzinkie, and we had our own house and we had three daughters there.

MARY JANE: How did you meet Zack?

GLADYS: In Ouzinkie at the cannery. Oh we knew everybody, almost ,in Afognak. People were so nice, they were so good, so helpful, when we were growing up any time we needed help we got help any time we wanted to, we just helped and shared everything. It was very nice, yeah, it was a small little place. But now, my goodness I can't get over how big it is. There are a lot of new homes there and lots more people. At the time I guess when I was growing up maybe there were about 300 people. Now they have a nice new school .

MARY JANE: You moved here in 1947, people probably had lots of gardens here then.

GLADYS: Yes, but we didn't we had a little house on Mission Road, right across from where Mary and Walter Shuravloff used to live. We bought it from Sanguinettis. And Cecil Brown and Marion was right there too behind us. At that time I was still working in the hospital.

MARY JANE: Statehood was in 1959, was that a pretty big deal for you?

GLADYS: What year was that? Oh, I don't know, I was busy working . Summertimes I used to quit the hospital and go work in the cannery. I worked on clams, and salmon, and king crab. So I kept busy all the time.

MARY JANE: Did you notice any changes when Alaska became a state?

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GLADYS: I don't remember. Zack happened to be in Anchorage, he was in the hospital at the time. As soon as my girls graduated from High school they left, Maria was working for Pier 91 in Seattle, and she went to California to school, she was a stewardess for 8 years, for Flying Tigers. And Kathryn went to Seattle and worked for Boeing. That's where she met her husband, but Maria's husband was in the military. She's got three sons. Kathryn has got two girls. And Norma in Anchorage has seven children all together. So I'm the only one left here. But every time I go to Seattle, "Mom you're moving here, you're moving here!" They'll tell me the same thing when I go to Anchorage. I love it here, I just like it here. Everything is so convenient for me, and everything is so close by. And I'm with Lena Metrokin all the time she's on the same floor, she's knitting and crocheting, every evening we're just busy, and doing a lot of sewing down at the Senior Center too, making little quilts.

MARY JANE: And I suppose you do a lot of baking for the church?

GLADYS: Oh yes, I've always been involved in the Russian Church, in the sisterhood. In the village we always went Starring, it was so much fun. And we made the stars, and cleaned the church and made the little flowers from the crepe paper, you know, decorated the church and everything. We were very active in church, Mamma was very religious. We couldn't miss the holidays, we had to go to church.

MARY JANE: Do you remember anything special about Christmas?

GLADYS: Christmastime we used to have so much fun, after starring, and we used to do a lot of baking, we'd go visiting, you know. We visited a lot, no matter where we'd go we'd have some tea, that's Chy, we can't leave the place 'til we have Chy. And we'd have school programs with speeches and we had plays. And I remember we used to get Red Cross, all Santa's little gifts, and Santa Claus used to be there, we used to enjoy that so much. Dora and I played a lot of dolls, we were just crazy about

dolls, and Mamma used to make us rag dolls.

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MARY JANE: You probably didn't have a sewing machine, everything was hand sewn?

GLADYS: Um hmm. A lot of hand sewing. Finally Mamma got a sewing machine, well I was right there working at her sewing machine making doll clothes. So I learned to sew. Growing up Mama taught us how to embroider and how to crochet . I was just telling Lena the other day, Dora and I had a room upstairs and we had kerosene lamps, and we'd be sewing there and embroidering, and those kerosene lamps they don't give much light , til we started getting those mantels, what do you call those big lamps with the little mantels?

MARY JANE: Coleman lanterns?

GLADYS: Yes, yes. They gave more light but kerosene lamps didn't give much light.

MARY JANE: Did you ever go traveling beyond Afognak much when you were living in Ouzinkie as a child? Did your family ever come into Kodiak?

GLADYS: Yes, we did . I had grandparents here and Mom used to visit with them. Not too often but we did, summertime we used to come visit. Wintertime we just stayed home.

MARY JANE: Did you do much sledding and ice skating in the winter?

GLADYS: Yes, I was poor on skates though, I had a hard time . I'd come home all my knees would be all scratched up falling down. My brothers were good at it, yeah. But they tried to teach me how to skate, Dora did real well. There were little lakes in Ouzinkie, not big lakes. I never learned how to swim. Mamma was so protective of us girls too, especially me I guess after all the boys. She used to take us out all the time to go beachcombing, we used to pick up all the pretty little shells, some were pink some were white and I remember we used to have those cigar boxes and we'd paste them up and cover them with those cute little shells. Yes we always was on the beach.

Summertime we'd be picking berries, making jam and jellies.

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MARY JANE: Are there places where you can pick lowbush cranberries in Ouzinkie?

GLADYS: Gee, I don't remember picking lowbush cranberries. We picked a lot of highbush cranberries . There were some other kind of berries. They said they had all kind of berries before the eruption ( the eruption of Katmai in 1912, later it was learned it was Mt. Nova Erupta), but after that you know that ash just covered them, it took time I guess for them to grow back again. I remember Ouzinkie had big berries, big berries, yeah. There used to be quite a bit of Russianberries in Ouzinkie. Now of course a lot of them got taken out , and houses built up there, you know where we used to pick berries and all that, nothing but houses. Here too. Corinne Wilson always tells me where she used to pick blueberries there's houses in there now too. And we never used to pick blueberries right away til the end of August ,or September. Ah, then they're nice and sweet, no bugs. Here they pick them right away as soon as they start, too early. But we used to pick some little red berries, boy I can't remember, I don't know how you call them . . . . . they were on the ground, mossberries maybe. Boy, Mamma used to make a good jam.

MARY JANE: Did your Mother make a lot of Perok?

GLADYS: Umm humm, yeah, she used to bake. Late in the fall we'd kill those cows, you know, and by November month they'd be hanging, cause it was cold, we had no refrigerators or anything. And we'd salt some meat too, and we'd fill the little barrels with the brine. It was corned beef, oh it was good. And then Mr. Grimes had a little store there, a grocery store, so we had canned stuff, and flour, sugar, everything we needed we got from the store. Yeah, we always had food to eat . We were just lucky, lucky we had a nice mother. She was so sweet, so nice. She was from here, from Kodiak. That's where she went to Russian school, here, she read Russian and she used to write. We all grew up talking Russian, no Aleut or no English. We went to

school we didn't know how to speak English. No, because we all spoke Russian. I

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started going to school with my girlfriends and I learned Aleut from them, but at home we were all speaking Russian. Papa spoke real good Russian too, and so did my two Uncles there. But Mamma said when she married Papa, she was young, and he was much older than her, and she didn't know how to talk Aleut, or anything, she went to Ouzinkie, there was a lot of people there talking Aleut. But it's a good thing Katelnikoff's were there, you know, grown up girls, they spoke Russian so she didn't know anybody there so she was with them all the time talking Russian, til she learned Aleut. Papa spoke Russian and Aleut both.

MARY JANE: Did they have any trouble with English?

GLADYS: Well, Mom did learn, you know after we started going to school we used to come and talk to her in English and she understood, but she couldn't speak.

MARY JANE: What was your Mother's maiden name?

GLADYS: Romanioff, Maria Romanioff.

MARY JANE: Do you still understand and speak Aleut?

GLADYS: Oh yes, I understand, but I have a hard time pronouncing, I don't pronounce my words very well. Even in English I can't pronounce my words too well. If Corinne is here she corrects me. [laughing] But I said tell me any time.

MARY JANE: Does Corinne know Russian?

GLADYS: Oh yes. Corinne was a Sargent girl. I'm glad my girls don't take after me because they speak real well, speak real well English. They understand Russian, but they don't speak it that well. Maria went to Russian school, night school. She's the one a lot of times on the phone we talk Russian. Kathryn understands you know, but now she has all those Russian tapes, France, Asian, Russian and English, this way she learns.

MARY JANE: Does Kathryn live in Kodiak?

GLADYS: No. She's in Seattle, I have two girls in Seattle. Maria in Bellevue, Kathryn

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in Renton. And Norma is in Anchorage. I have twelve grandchildren, nine great-grandchildren, and one on the way. I'm gone most of the time summertime to visit them. Wintertime I'm mostly home, that's when we do all the crochet work and sewing. It's very nice at Senior Center we have two buses, or cars so twice a week or anytime you want to we could go grocery shopping. I go to the hospital and visit, we go anyplace we want to. It's very,very nice here, I like it here. Our church is just down the hill, Kraft's is not far, or City Market , we go to Safeway with the driver, it's just a dollar one way, coming back we pay a dollar, that's all. So we're pretty lucky.

MARY JANE: What do you remember about the 1964 tidal wave?

GLADYS: Yeah, I was here working, I was at work when it hit, we were just getting done with dishes and cleaning up. My daughter came and picked me up, we stopped at the house to pick up Zack and we went up to the schoolhouse. Where were you during the earthquake?

MARY JANE: I was in Kodiak. My family lived on upper Millbay road, near the graveyard. We had to evacuate, they came by and said we had move to higher ground.

GLADYS: That's why we went to the schoolhouse. We lived on Mission Road, not that far from the water. But it didn't effect our house. My daughter Norma, they were here at the time, and her children were small, they had a new trailer,down by the Beachcomber , they lost that. Julia Wolkoff lost her house too, down by the waterfront, on Tugura Road, yeah that went in the tidal wave.

MARY JANE: I'm curious if you attend the Russian New Year's Masquerade Ball?

GLADYS: I do, but I never mask. I didn't like to mask at all, I feel like choking every time I cover my face. But I enjoy going watching them dance. I used to love to dance, but not any more, I have a problem with my knee, so I haven't gone dancing in a long time. I don't think I went dancing since my husband passed away. Zack was a good

dancer. We did Schottische, Waltzes, and Foxtrot. Most of the social occasions were

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dances, and dinner parties, birthdays, and baby showers. There was a dance hall in Ouzinkie, we used to do a lot of dancing. But there wasn't too many people at the dances either, because it was a small, small village. And from the girls I guess I was the tallest, I was tall, the others were small, dancing with little, short, men. I'm five foot six, I think I used to be five foot eight. Mamma was five foot eight, she was tall, she was strong. And we used to have banya [Russian heat or steam bath]. We used to go down the beach and pick all that wood for banya, and my two sisters would fill their gunnysacks full, you know, climbing up that little hill, [laughing], mine was only half full, I wasn't that strong. But I stayed in the house all the time, I took care of the house, and my sisters and brothers, when Mamma had to go take care of the cows, especially in the Spring when they're ready to have their little calves, she'll take Dora, and she'll bring the cow back and kept her in the barn, until she has that calf. And I was always left at home, taking care of the house. We were just lucky the cows never had problems. I think she said one time Papa had to help a cow because it was breech. She always said she couldn't watch that cow, she went home and here Papa came and we got a little calf. We had dogs and cats. In the Spring we used to watch those little chicks. They were so cute, just like little powder puffs, you know white and yellow. Yeah we had a lot of chickens. After I got married, Zack and I didn't have any cows, all we had was, chickens, a dog, and a cat. When growing up with Mom we had cows, we did all our little chores we had to do, yeah. . . . . it was fun growing up. It was really fun, people were so nice and helpful. Mamma helped a lot of other women, if they were sick or something, they needed help, Mom was always there. T.B. was going around, especially if the mothers were dying Mama was always there taking care of the house and helping them as much as she can.

MARY JANE: She must have been quite a woman to be able to take care of so much.

GLADYS: She was, she was, yeah. When I stop and think of her I think "How could she do that?" , we were just small, Kathryn was born two months after Papa died, it must have been hard, she worked hard, I know she did. But the boys were nice, they helped her a lot. They were so good. There were no such thing as drinking or smoking in the house either. Nothing like that, we didn't know anything about drugs. Now things are so different.

Mary Jane : It sounds like you had a really wonderful family life.

GLADYS: I really did, we were a really close family, loving family. There was no arguments or anything like that, with Mom around she wanted a nice happy home. That's the way we were brought up.

MARY JANE: It's so nice that you can see the Russian church from your window!

GLADYS: Oh, I like it here, I like Kodiak.

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